

A REVIEW

OF

SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS

WHICH ARE COMMONLY ADVANCED

AGAINST PARLIAMENTARY INTERFERENCE

IN BEHALF OF

THE NEGRO SLAVES,

WITH

A STATEMENT OF

OPINIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED

ON THAT SUBJECT

BY MANY OF OUR MOST DISTINGUISHED STATESMEN,

INCLUDING,

EARL GREY,	MR. FOX,
EARL OF LIVERPOOL,	MR. WINDHAM,
LORD GRENVILLE,	MR. WILBERFORCE,
LORD DUDLEY AND	MR. CANNING,
WARD,	MR. BROUGHAM,
LORD MELVILLE,	SIR S. ROMILLY,
MR. BURKE,	MR. WARRE,
MR. PITT,	&c. &c. &c.

LONDON :

*Printed by Ellerton and Henderson,
Gough Square, Fleet Street;*

SOLD BY J. HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY;
AND J. & A. ARCH, CORNHILL.

1823.

A REVIEW,

&c.

THE subject of Colonial Slavery being about to be brought before Parliament, it may not be unseasonable to take a brief view of some of the arguments which will probably be advanced against the proposed legislative interference with that system. In replying to those arguments, it is my intention to have recourse, not so much to my own reasonings as to the recorded opinions of some of our most distinguished statesmen, who, during the last thirty-five years, have been led to employ their powerful minds in considering the subject.

Throughout the whole progress of the controversy respecting Slavery and the Slave Trade, one main argument of the Colonial party against public discussion has been **THE DANGER OF INSURRECTION**. From the year 1787, to the present day, it has been their uniform policy (and that policy has to a certain extent succeeded, especially with the timid and the ignorant,) to excite alarm on this point, whenever questions touching any part of their system have been publicly agitated.

In the year 1788, a bill was brought into Parliament by Sir William Dolben for regulating the African Slave-Trade, and preventing those horrors of various kinds which had hitherto accompanied the Middle Passage.

The bill was opposed by the united influence of the Slave-traders of Great Britain and the Planters of

the West Indies. The absolute ruin of that invaluable branch of commerce, the Slave Trade, and the entire loss of the immense capital embarked in the West Indies, were confidently and clamorously predicted as the certain result even of that measure of regulation. The alarm of insurrection was at the same time sounded throughout the land. And here it is curious, and not a little edifying, to observe the identity of the very expressions which were then employed to stigmatize this harmless and beneficent measure—as a measure of cruelty and blood—as pregnant with devastation and massacre—with those which now fill the mouths of the holders of Slaves whenever they allude to the approaching discussion on the subject of Slavery. A single instance may suffice.

While Sir W. Dolben's bill was before the House of Lords, on the 25th June 1788, the Duke of CHANDOS produced a letter which had been addressed by a gentleman in Jamaica to Mr. Fuller, then agent for that island, informing him, that, "in consequence of what was doing in Parliament, the Negroes expected that an end was to be put to their slavery; that there was the greatest reason to fear they would rise in consequence; and that *the island was in a state of great alarm and apprehension.*" The Duke added, that "he had many more corresponding accounts with which he would not then trouble the house; but as often as *the bill* was agitated he should think it his duty to warn their Lordships of the danger that ANY *agitation of such a subject* was liable to." (The Duke, be it remembered, was speaking of a proposal not to emancipate the Slaves, but to regulate the Middle Passage). "The universal massacre," he went on to say, "of the Whites might be the consequence. He must be permitted to know rather more of the West-India Islands than most of their Lordships;

and it was his duty to lay the result of his acquaintance with the customs of these islands before their Lordships. *The Negroes read the English newspapers as constantly as the ships from England came in ; and, FROM WHAT WAS THEN DOING, they would conclude their final emancipation was at hand*.*"

By such assertions and arguments did the Colonists of that day endeavour to prevent the Parliament of England from taking a single step to abate the atrocities, and lessen the wholesale murders, of the Middle Passage, or to alleviate, in however small a degree, the mass of misery which was crowded within the holds of Slave-ships. It is unnecessary to say, that the apprehensions then expressed proved utterly vain, and that not the slightest disturbance of any kind occurred in the West Indies to justify them. But to say this, is to give a very inadequate idea of the gross imposition on Parliament and the Public, which such a statement involved. During the year 1788, and for several years both before and after that period, the whole of our West-India possessions continued in a state of the most profound tranquillity. Not only did no insurrection occur, but not the very slightest tendency to insurrection was manifested, in any one of our colonies ; a fact which may be attested by persons who resided in the West Indies during these years, and who never heard of a single occurrence which was capable even of being perverted to the purposes of alarm †. Then comes the bold and confident statement of the noble Duke, grounded on the assumption of his superior acquaintance

* Hansard's Parliamentary History, 1788-9, pp. 646, 647.

† The insurrection in Grenada did not occur till March 1795 ; and this was caused *in no degree* by parliamentary discussion, but by the intrigues of Victor Hugues, operating on the French planters and Slaves (who were very numerous) in that island.

with West-Indian habits and customs, that "*the Negroes read the English newspapers as constantly as the ships from England came in.*" In making this statement, the Duke was doubtless deceived; but whoever might be its author, the profligate contempt of truth which it necessarily involved, could only be paralleled by the grossness of that ignorance which could be deluded by it. To every man who had resided in the West Indies, it must have been known not only to be false, but to be as absolutely absurd and preposterous as it would be to hear a Jamaica legislator gravely affirming, in the House of Assembly of that island, that the horses in England read the Jamaica newspapers. I can think of no parallel which will more aptly describe the case. The Slaves in Jamaica were universally just as ignorant of letters as the horses are in England.

Similar alarms of danger were sounded during every succeeding stage of the abolition controversy, and with as little foundation in truth as that just alluded to; and on this alleged ground of danger, not only the abolition of the *British* Slave-Trade, but even that of the *Foreign* Slave-Trade carried on in British ships, was uniformly opposed, for many successive years, by the West Indians.

In 1791, we find Mr. J. STANLEY, a West-Indian agent, threatening the Parliament with *the horrors of insurrection* for agitating the question of abolition*.

In 1792, Mr. BAILLIE, agent for Grenada, affirmed, that the "*West-India Islands were filled with emissaries and inflammatory publications by the friends of the abolition* †."

In 1794, when Mr. WILBERFORCE moved for leave to

* Hansard's Parliamentary History, vol. xxix. p. 315.

† *Ib.* p. 1079. None of those emissaries were ever named, nor were any of those publications ever produced.

bring in a bill to abolish the Slave Trade *for the supply of foreign colonies*, it was opposed by the West Indians generally*. Sir W. YOUNG and others represented the proposal as “*dangerous in point of time and experiment;*” and Mr. JENKINSON, now Lord LIVERPOOL, also thought *such a bill “highly dangerous †.”*

In 1795, Mr. WILBERFORCE was again opposed on

* Only one West Indian, a Mr. VAUGHAN, was of a contrary opinion. He thought it extraordinary, and extraordinary it doubtless was, “that any British colonists should be anxious to raise up rivals to supplant themselves.” The West-Indian body, however, turned a deaf ear to this friendly remonstrance, and continued to oppose the abolition of the Foreign as well as of the British Slave-Trade, until they had verified Mr. Vaughan’s prediction, and had seen themselves actually supplanted by the rivals they had themselves thus raised up. Even in 1806, Jamaica petitioned against the abolition of the Foreign Slave-Trade; and this, notwithstanding the loud warning which had been addressed to the West Indians on this subject by Mr. Stephen, in a work published in 1804, entitled *The Opportunity*. It may not be without its use to quote in this place a passage from Mr. Wilberforce’s Letter to his Constituents in 1806, to the same effect, viz.—

“What but party-spirit could cause them to support the continuance of that branch of the Slave Trade, which consisted in supplying foreigners with Slaves; and still more, what else could prevent their even strenuously and eagerly anticipating the efforts of the Abolitionists for stopping the supply for the cultivation of the immeasurable expanse of the South-American continent.” “The proprietor in our old islands will not deny that these continental settlements have not only injured him by greatly increasing the quantity of colonial produce in the market; but that enjoying very decided advantages over our older islands, from a more fertile soil, from being exempted from hurricanes, from the opportunity of feeding their slaves more plentifully and at a cheaper rate; they have been to him the cause of great loss and embarrassment. Had this evil been suffered to advance, the ruin which must have followed from it, though gradual, would have been sure and complete.”—1st Ed. p. 284.—3d Ed. p. 133.

† Hansard’s Parliamentary History, vol. xxx. pp. 1446, 1447.

similar grounds, in an attempt to abolish the Foreign Slave-Trade*.

In 1796, the renewal of the motion for the general abolition was represented by Mr. JENKINSON and Mr. DENT, as *endangering the safety* of the West-India Islands; and Mr. BARHAM affirmed, that if carried, it would create *universal rebellion in the islands* †.

In 1798, Sir W. YOUNG desired the House to reflect what *calamities* might happen if the motion was carried ‡; and in 1799 he represented the mischiefs of *discussion* as “*obvious and fatal. The effect would be to deluge the islands with blood* §.”

Again in 1807, to pass over the intermediate discussions, we find the enemies of the Abolition using the same language. Lord REDESDALE believed “it would be the means of producing in the West Indies *all the horrors of insurrection* ||.” Mr. BROWN, the agent of Antigua, dwelt on “the alarming danger to the lives of our fellow-subjects from the Abolition. He viewed it with fearful anxiety as *necessarily leading to a fatal paroxysm of insurrection and revolutionary horror*. When the Negroes in the island shall learn what has been done, it will be sufficient to animate them to a spirit of discontent and a desire of redress, from which a scene of misery and horror may be expected equal to that which has disgraced France.”

Nor were these alarming views of danger confined to the warmth of parliamentary debate; they formed a prominent topic in all the petitions presented to the Legislature on the subject, from the beginning to the end of the controversy, by the West-Indian Assemblies and

* Hansard's Parliamentary History, vol. xxxi. p. 1330.

† Ibid. vol. xxxii. p. 740.

‡ Ibid. vol. xxxiii. p. 1402

§ Ibid. vol. xxxiv. p. 528.]

|| Ibid. vol. viii. p. 701.

their agents. Even so late as the year 1807, the petitions on this subject continued to speak the same language. They all professed to view with "*peculiar alarm*" the very DISCUSSION of the subject, as *necessarily leading to scenes of horror and blood*. And at a still later period, in 1815, when Mr. Wilberforce brought forward his bill for establishing a registry of slaves in the West Indies, similar denunciations of danger were renewed in still louder and more vehement tones than had ever been heard before; although it was not very easy to perceive what connection existed between a Registry Bill and insurrection. That they had in reality no connection, excepting what was attributed to them by the policy of some West Indians, and the blind passion of others, is perfectly obvious from what has since taken place. The different Colonial Legislatures have since passed Registry Acts for themselves; and Parliament, (with the vain view of giving force and efficacy to these crude, imperfect, and inconsistent enactments,) has also passed a general law of the same kind. And all this has been done without the least agitation, or pretext of agitation among the slaves. The subject excited no more interest or attention among them than a turnpike bill would have done; and but for the indiscreet, and clamorous, and misplaced opposition of the West Indians themselves, in 1816, the measure would have passed then as quietly as it afterwards did at a somewhat later period.

The best answer which can be given to those menaces of insurrection, by which the proposal to abolish slavery is now opposed, seems therefore to be, our past experience of the utter falsehood of similar alarms created for a similar purpose. And upon that ground the matter might be safely left to the good sense of the country. It may

not, however, be inexpedient to bring forward some authorities on the subject to which it will be felt that no inconsiderable weight is due.

The general feeling, indeed, of our eminent statesmen was in strict unison with that of the Marquis TOWNSEND, who stated in 1788, that he would “not be influenced by such reports, when he was doing a right thing as a legislator, and that he could not be made to believe that the Negroes would be induced to rise *because* Parliament was intent on granting them relief*.” Who, indeed, ever heard of an attempt on the part of prisoners to break from confinement by force, and at the hazard of their lives, when there was a fair hope of early and peaceful relief? Such a proceeding on the part of the slaves would also be contrary to all experience and to all analogy. No instance can be produced to justify the apprehension of it. But innumerable instances may be brought forward of a contrary kind; instances, that is to say, which prove that the fair hope of relief, by peaceable means, would extinguish even the desire to rebel, in those who had ground to expect such relief †.

But it may be further demonstrated, that the West Indians, when they sounded, in former times, those alarms of danger from public discussion which they are now repeating, had really no faith in their own representations. Let us hear on this point the statement of Earl GREY, in 1807.

“We are told,” says his Lordship, “that the West Indies will be put into a state of revolt if we agree to

* Hansard's Parl. Hist. 1788-9, p. 647.

† See on this subject a work which has just appeared from the pen of the venerable champion of this cause, Mr. Clarkson, entitled Thoughts, &c.

the abolition ;—and the preamble of the Bill, which states that the Slave Trade is contrary to justice and humanity, is in this view particularly complained of. But is it necessary to tell the Negro, torn from his native land, his wife, his children, his friends, that the act of violence which tears him from all the former endearments of life, is contrary to humanity? If he cannot see it in the wounds inflicted on the back of his fellow-sufferer; if he cannot hear it in the cries of his fellow-slave, are we to suppose that he will read it in the preamble of an act of Parliament? But the West Indians themselves do not believe the argument. If they did, never was the conduct of men more imprudently regulated. After twenty years, during which the question has been agitated, is the House to be told, that all the debates, motions, resolutions, and reports which have gone forth, declaring Slavery to be contrary to humanity, have had no effect in producing that conviction, and that this preamble is to produce it? Has not THE JAMAICA GAZETTE, on various occasions, stated the *very means by which insurrection might be excited, and plans of revolt organised and carried into effect?* And yet, is it not notorious that there never were so few insurrections amongst the Negroes,” (indeed there had been none, if we except the revolt caused by the French in Grenada,) “as in the last twenty years, during which an abolition of this infamous traffic has been under discussion?*

In 1816, Mr. BROUGHAM adopted the same line of reasoning, and produced to the House THREE JAMAICA GAZETTES, in which it was openly and vehemently asserted, that *Registration was only a cloak for emancipation* †.

Again, in 1818, Sir SAMUEL ROMILLY, who had

* Hansard's Debates, vol. viii. p. 951.

† Ibid. vol. xxxiv. p. 1213.

brought before the House some cases of cruelty which had occurred in the West Indies, was led to remark ;—
 “ We are told that such discussions have no other effect than to excite disorder and insubordination, and to break the chain which bound the slave to his master. This goes, however, to prevent all discussion. Are we then, under such a pretence, to allow slaves to undergo the most rigorous treatment without inquiry? It was the custom to attribute every insurrection among the Slaves to those who took an active interest in their condition. The charge was unfounded. Revolts were much more frequent before the abolition than they had been since, as may be seen from Long’s History of Jamaica. It was merely a cry set up by the island newspapers, and by those interested in continuing the abuse*.”

* Hansard’s Debates, vol. xxxviii. p. 854.

It may be expected, that some allusion should be here made to the BARBADOES INSURRECTION, as it is called, of 1816. Of this alleged insurrection it may be sufficient to say, that for some cause or other, the whole of the circumstances attending it have been most cautiously suppressed by Government, as well as by the Colonial authorities. Not a single official document respecting it has been allowed to see the light. All we know is, that *the alleged insurgents made no attack: they were the party attacked. No White man appears to have been killed or even wounded by the Blacks, while from one to two thousand Blacks are said to have been hunted down, and either put to death without resistance, or summarily tried and executed. Into this bloody transaction, Parliament has made no inquiry whatever!* Why have not the West Indians called for such inquiry? Until this is done; until the whole of this most mysterious affair is placed in the light of day, it will be impossible for them to use it as an argument against discussion. Neither Parliament nor the country can forget the utter contempt of Negro life which prevailed among the Whites in Barbadoes, as displayed both in their statute-book, and in the ferocious acts of wanton barbarity communicated by Earl Seaforth in 1805; and both will require proof, before they decide that the real cause of this enormous waste of human life, was an insurrection produced by public discussion in this country. Had the different details on

The reader will probably be satisfied, by what he has read, that the alleged danger of insurrection from parliamentary discussion, though it may have proved a very convenient topic of argument, in resisting every successive attempt to abolish the Slave Trade, was wholly without any foundation in fact. In the present case, therefore, after the uniform experience of thirty-five years, the presumption must be admitted to be very strongly adverse to the reality of the alleged peril. Indeed if the representations of the West-India party are worthy of credit, THE STATE OF THE NEGROES IS ONE OF SUCH HAPPINESS AND COMFORT as would, of itself, render abortive every attempt to excite them to insubordination, and would seem to preclude on their parts all desire of change. And this has been the uniform language of the Colonists:—

“I have lived,” said Mr. BAILLIE, the agent of Grenada in 1792, “sixteen years in the West Indies; and I declare, in the most solemn manner, that *I consider the Negroes in the British West-India Islands to be in as comfortable a state as the lower orders of mankind in any country of Europe. They are perfectly contented with their situation* *.”

Mr. BARHAM affirmed, in 1796, that “*the SLAVES*

this subject been favourable to the Barbadian Colonists; or could they have exhibited clear proof of *designed* revolt and insurrection on the part of the Slaves; and, above all, could they have connected such revolt with the discussions respecting the Registry Bill in England, the public would have been satiated with statements on the subject: nothing could have availed to suppress them. But not a syllable has been officially published, either in England or in Barbadoes, which can throw light on these dark and sanguinary occurrences;—nothing to shew the guilt of the Blacks, or the lenity and forbearance of the Whites. This deep and deathlike silence speaks volumes.

* Hansard's Parl. Hist. vol. xxix. p. 1079.

were better fed and clothed, and enjoyed more of the comforts of life, than the generality of the labouring class throughout Europe."

Mr. CHARLES ELLIS, in 1797, repelled the charges brought against the West-Indian system, of an *excess of labour and deficiency of food, and bestowed the highest praise on the consolidated Slave-law of Jamaica**.

In 1798, Sir WILLIAM YOUNG affirmed, that "*the Negroes on the islands had NOTHING to complain of. They enjoyed COMPLETE PROTECTION: their property was BETTER SECURED than our own*†."

And to omit innumerable assertions of the same kind, Earl ST. VINCENTS, in 1807, asserted, that "he was enabled to state that *the West-Indian islands formed PARADISE ITSELF to the Negroes, in comparison with their native country*‡."

The statements of the present day are no less strong and sweeping. But then they are generally accompanied by an observation which goes far to discredit all the earlier panegyrics pronounced on the system of Negro Slavery; namely, that *very great improvements have taken place, of late years, in the treatment of the Slaves*. One would naturally have supposed, from those previous statements, that there had been little or no room for improvement.

In 1788, the Marquis TOWNSEND, after having listened to some such sweeping affirmations of the superior comfort and happiness of the West-Indian Slave,

* Ibid. vol. xxxiii. p. 251. This law, however, requires only to be read, in order to shew how little it merited such an encomium.

† Ibid. vol. xxxiv. p. 558. And yet, at a later period, when he was Governor of Tobago, he acknowledged, that the law of evidence was such as almost necessarily "covered the most guilty European with impunity," whatever oppressions or cruelties he might have committed towards slaves.

‡ Hansard's Debates, vol. viii. p. 670.

as have been quoted above, got up and remarked, that “if it were true, as was alleged, that the Negroes were *twice* as happy as the English labourers, Parliament ought to sit all the summer, in order to put the English yeoman on a footing with the West-India slave*.

But in reply to all the glowing descriptions which have, at any time, been given of the happiness of the Negro slave, it might be sufficient to adduce the decided testimony borne, by some of the most distinguished of the West-India Planters, to the NECESSITY OF PARLIAMENTARY INTERFERENCE, in order to meliorate their condition. Mr. BRYAN EDWARDS, and others, have painted, in the most affecting colours, the wretchedness which results from the principle of law, universally recognised in the British West Indies, that SLAVES ARE CHATTELS, and have dwelt on *the immense benefits they would derive from being attached to the soil*. Mr. CHARLES ELLIS took the same view of the subject, when, in 1797, he moved an address to the Crown, that the different Colonial Legislatures might be called upon “to adopt such measures as should appear to them best calculated to obviate the causes *which have hitherto impeded the natural increase of the Negroes already in the islands*,” and “particularly with a view to the same effect, to employ such means as may conduce to *the moral and religious improvement of the Negroes*, and secure to them, throughout all the British West Indies, *the certain, immediate, and active protection of the law*.” And in the speech which accompanied the motion, he dwelt on the necessity of affording to the Slaves *moral instruction and education*.

Now there must have been, in the mind of Mr. Ellis and his friends, a strong persuasion that in 1797 much,

* Hansard's Parl. Hist. 1788-9, p. 646.

very much remained to be done by the Colonial Legislatures to improve the condition of the slaves. It is for them to shew what steps have been taken, during the twenty-six years which have since elapsed, to realize any of those improvements which were so admitted, by the whole body of the West-Indians in Parliament, (all of whom supported the address) to be then greatly needed. *The Slaves have not yet ceased to be CHATTELS. No means of education have yet been provided for them. No effective steps have yet been taken for their religious improvement; nay, they are to this hour denied the Sabbath as a day of repose and religious observance. So far have the Colonial Legislatures been from removing the impediments to the natural increase of the Slaves, that that work is still to be commenced, the marriage tie being still unknown among them. And so far are the Slaves from being CERTAINLY, IMMEDIATELY, and ACTIVELY PROTECTED by LAW, that, BY LAW, at the present moment, every slave, male or female, in the Colonies, may be punished by their owner or overseer, without his being required to give any reason for so doing, not only with any length of confinement he may think proper, but with thirty-nine lashes of the cartwhip on the naked body; and may also be compelled to labour, willing or unwilling, without wages, by the impulse of the same cruel instrument.*

The West Indians boast that their Slaves are as happy as the peasantry of England. But, let us suppose a state of things in this country, in which every bailiff of an estate should be armed with a power of driving the labourers, both men and women, to their work, by means of the lash, and should be also at liberty to use his entire discretion as to the infliction of punishment, by confinement to *any* extent, and by the cartwhip to the extent of *thirty-nine lashes on the*

bare body, for any conduct which he might construe into an offence. What, I ask, would, in this case, be the condition of our English peasantry? And can we regard the overseers of the West Indies as safer depositaries of such tremendous powers than English bailiffs would be; especially when we consider all the circumstances of degradation arising from colour, and other peculiarities attaching to Negro bondage? Or are indeed the overseers of the West Indies angels, and not men, that there is no risk of their abusing the authority thus reposed in them? Mr. BROUGHAM is well known to have deeply considered the subject of Colonial manners. Whoever reads his work on Colonial Policy, or his Speech on the Registry Bill in 1816, will see how little he thought these men qualified for the due exercise of so momentous a trust*.

But it was not only in 1797, that the necessity of parliamentary interference was admitted by the West Indians. Again, in 1816, the same necessity was implied in the motion of Lord Holland in the House of Lords, and of Mr. Palmer in the House of Commons, praying his Majesty “to recommend, IN THE STRONGEST MANNER, to the local authorities in the respective colonies, to carry into effect every measure which may tend to promote the moral and religious improvement, as well as the comfort and happiness of the Negroes.” But why this STRONG recommendation from Parliament (proposed too by West Indians), if it were true that the state of the Slaves was what it ought to be; was, in short, as happy as that of British labourers?

To all this the West Indians may, and probably will reply—“To such parliamentary interference as this we do not object. What we object to is ANY ATTEMPT

* Hansard's Debates, vol. xxxiv. p. 1217.

ON THE PART OF PARLIAMENT TO LEGISLATE FOR THE COLONISTS; as such an attempt would be a violation of the sacred rights of the Colonies, *whose local legislatures ALONE ought to make laws for their internal government.*"

Had the previous references made by Parliament to the Colonial Legislatures been attended with beneficial effects, such a plan might have been more deserving of attention. But this is notoriously not the case. On the point of RIGHT, however, what has been the opinion of our most distinguished statesmen?

Mr. BURKE, it will be recollected, (himself the great opposer of the taxation of the North-American Colonies,) *framed a plan for ameliorating the condition of the Slaves, which was to be enacted and enforced by THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT ALONE, without the intervention or even recognition of the Colonial Legislatures.*—Mr. DUNDAS, afterwards Lord MELVILLE, followed, in this respect the general plan of Mr. Burke. He professed to have in view "*the total annihilation of hereditary Slavery.*" "And he should suggest (he said) the manner in which he thought this might be accomplished. The planter who was the owner of the father, in his opinion, should take away the child from the moment of his birth; take care to have him inspired with a sense of religion; and when he had attained to a certain age, the boy in return should serve him for so many years, till he had repaid him the expense of his education. The consequence of this must be visible. Thus nurtured in the principles of religion, he would be filled with a just sense of duty and gratitude. If his master was a humane man, he would feel a consolation in what he had done. *The parents would also turn with gratitude to their owner, and FORGET THEIR MISERIES in the prospects of the*

happiness of their offspring. The rising generation, thus trained and *conducted in the paths of piety*, would be attached to the island, and, of course, in the hour of danger spring forward in the defence of it. Was this visionary? He trusted not. *He was well convinced that the heart of the African was susceptible of the finest impressions of gratitude, as experience had evinced; and that it was also susceptible of the tenderest emotions of love.* He most earnestly solicited all the gentlemen interested in the question to support his modification: he would sooner see all the lands in the West Indies cultivated by freemen than by slaves.’

“To illustrate the topic of discussion, he referred to an instance of the abolition of Slavery in the northern parts of the kingdom. Alluding to the parliamentary proceedings in 1775, he stated, that, at that period, the coaliers, salters, and those employed under ground, were in a state of Slavery; and that *when it was proposed to acknowledge them AS FREE CITIZENS, a clamour was excited that those concerned in the coaleries would be ruined; that the slavery of these poor people was a necessary evil; and that to grant them freedom would raise the price of coals beyond the capacity of their fellow-citizens.* THESE ASSERTIONS, HOWEVER, PROVED NUGATORY: THE PROPERTY WAS NOT INJURED, and the idea of an advance in the price of coals vanished in smoke*.”

Mr. WINDHAM appears to have viewed this matter in the same light with these two statesmen. In 1798, we find him saying, “I am inclined to trust for a while to the Colonial Assemblies *by way of experiment.* Had I no hopes of considerable advantage by doing so, I own I should be inclined to the plan of the late Mr.

* Clarendon’s Parliamentary Chronicle, vol. iv. p. 530.

Burke; a man who left no part of the interests of mankind unexamined, and who brought with him more wisdom in discussing every subject he attempted to investigate than any man I ever knew. His idea was *to take much of the power of legislation on this subject out of the hands of the Colonists, and to make many regulations within ourselves by which to meliorate the condition of the Negro* *."

Earl GREY, in 1807, looked forward to "*the abolition of Slavery, encouraged and assisted by such regulations as the wisdom of Parliament should think fit to adopt* †."

Lord GRENVILLE, in 1817, declared, "that he never could admit that by any address to the Crown," (alluding to that of the preceding year mentioned above,) "*a million of British subjects should be withdrawn from the control of the Imperial Parliament* ‡."

In 1818, Mr. WILBERFORCE observed,—“When it is known that the recommendation of such men as Mr. Ellis and Mr. Barham had failed to make any impression on the Colonial Assemblies, he could place no firm dependence, *except on the legislation of the mother country, and could put his trust in no other guarantee. It was their duty to watch over the interests of a million of beings at length recognised as fellow-creatures* §.”

On the same occasion, Sir S. ROMILLY remarked, that “it had been said that this country had not the power of legislating for the Colonies. It was needless for him to state, that *it had been already done in numerous instances.* He might only mention, that it had been done by the act by which Colonial property was made liable as assets for debt. No man could for a

* Hansard's Parl. Hist. vol. xxxiii. p. 1413.

† Hansard's Debates, vol. viii. p. 954.

‡ Ibid. vol. xxxv. p. 1205.

§ Ibid. vol xxxviii. p. 295.

moment imagine that the British Constitution could apply to these colonies. That constitution should be taken as a whole. It held, that *all men stood in a state of equality* IN THE EYE OF THE LAW. *The moment an individual set foot on British soil, he became free.* What then could be more inconsistent than to talk of establishing that constitution in the West Indies? For there its principles would be reversed and destroyed; and under the auspices of British liberty, Slavery would be rendered worse than under arbitrary governments. Arbitrary governments, indeed, did make laws for their Colonies. But how is that principle of the British Constitution to be applied to such Colonies as ours, that no man could be bound by laws to which he had not consented. In Dominica, for instance, it was enacted, that a free Man of Colour, coming hither from another island, became a slave, if he had not a certain certificate, and did not pay a tax of 35*l.* This was the enactment of those who talked of the British Constitution! A Slave once landed on the British coast became a freeman; but a free Man of Colour, the instant he touched the soil of Dominica, became a slave!—In short, the whole of these laws were founded on a principle diametrically opposite to that which formed the basis of the British Constitution. And, with respect to those laws which looked so well on paper, which appeared so well calculated to benefit the Slave Population, they not only were not executed, but were never *intended* to be carried into effect. But though these unfortunate beings were the slaves of their masters, they were also THE SUBJECTS OF THE KING. THEY OWED HIM ALLEGIANCE, AND HE WAS BOUND TO AFFORD THEM PROTECTION. THEY WERE AS MUCH SUBJECTS AS ENGLISHMEN WERE*.”

* Hansard's Debates, vol. xxxviii. pp. 302—304.

Mr. J. H. SMITH then stated, that “when he considered that in none of the Colonies any steps had been taken to encourage the manumission of slaves; when he considered the treatment to which, in all the Colonies, they were still subject; that the cartwhip was still resorted to as an instrument of discipline; that the slaves were still discredited as witnesses; and that their evidence could not be taken in a Court of Justice;—he could not help thinking it the duty of Parliament to protect those who might thus be exposed to oppression.

Mr. WARRE contended that it was absurd to suppose that any real good could be effected for ameliorating the condition of the slaves, unless discussions were raised in that House. It was by such discussions that every thing hitherto done had been effected*.

But by far the most decisive statement made on this subject came from Mr. CANNING. A speech of his, in 1799, is given at great length in Hansard’s Parliamentary History of that year, from which I shall take the liberty of making some extracts:—

Alluding to the Address moved by Mr. C. Ellis, in 1797, Mr. CANNING said, The point to be ascertained was, “*whether or not the Colonial Assemblies were, IN FACT, taking such steps as evinced a sincere desire to fulfil the expressed purpose of that motion.*”—He then proceeded to animadvert on a petition of the Assembly of Jamaica, in which they asserted the RIGHT of obtaining labourers from Africa. “Never,” observed Mr. CANNING, “even in the practical application of that detested and pernicious doctrine of the *rights of man*, had the word RIGHT been so shamefully affixed to murder, to devastation, to the invasion of public independence, to the pollution and destruction of private hap-

* Hansard’s Debates, pp. 308—852.

piness, to gross and unpalliated injustice, to the spreading of misery and mourning over the earth, to the massacre of innocent individuals, and to the extermination of unoffending nations, as when *THE RIGHT TO TRADE IN MAN'S BLOOD** was asserted by the enlightened government of a civilized country."

In a preceding part of the debate, Sir W. YOUNG had expressed much displeasure with Mr. Wilberforce, for having said that the laws of our islands did not even equal those of the French *Code Noire*. Mr. Canning made the following observations in reply: "The Hon. Bart. felt the utmost indignation that the laws by which the colonies of a free country were regulated should be compared with any body of legislation emanating from an absolute monarchy. He might refer to the papers upon the table, to prove that, be the *Code Noire* of France as bad as the Hon. Bart. was desirous it should be thought, the laws in the English islands had been found at least as susceptible of amendment. He might refer the Hon. Bart. to the maimings and mutilations, the scourges and spiked collars, the use of which was prohibited or regulated by the papers on the table. But, wishing to avoid invidious topics, he would only ask, in point of fact, whether he had never found, in the whole extent of his various reading, in ancient and modern history, that *the Colonies of a free country were in general worse regulated and worse administered than those of more absolute governments? That this was a truth all history shewed.*" "But," says the Hon. Bart., "it cannot be that a code framed by a despotic government should be superior or equal to the laws enacted by the government of a free country. Was he then prepared to argue that there was something in the nature of the relation between the despot and his slave, which must

* The very question now at issue.

vitiate, and render nugatory and null whatever laws the former might make for the benefit of the latter?"

"Was this his argument? He thanked him for it. He admitted its truth to any extent the Hon. Bart. pleased. And let the House, and the Hon. Bart. mark how it bore on the question before them. The question is, whether, in what is to be done towards alleviating and finally extinguishing the horrors of the Slave Trade, the proper agent was the British House of Commons, or the Colonial Assemblies. The Hon. Bart. contended that the Colonial Assemblies, and not the British House of Commons were the agents most proper to be employed. But what was his argument? 'Trust not the masters of slaves in what concerns legislation for Slavery. However specious their laws may appear, depend upon it they must be ineffectual in their application. *It is in the nature of things that they should be so!*' Granted. LET THEN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS DO THEIR PART THEMSELVES. *Let them not delegate the trust of doing it to those who, according to the Hon. Bart., cannot execute that trust fairly. Let the evil be remedied by an assembly of freemen, by the government of a free people, and not by those whom he represents as utterly unqualified for the undertaking, nor by the masters of slaves. Their laws, the Hon. Bart. avowed, could never reach, would never cure the evil.*" "There was something in the nature of absolute authority, in the relation between master and slave which made despotism, in all cases, and under all circumstances, an incompetent and unsure executor even of its own provisions in favour of the objects of its power."

Again—"A man's strongest permanent interests were liable to be overborne by his passions. Look at the laws on the table, and see what sort of evils they are intended to remedy. Besides, the interest of a proprietor resi-

dent on the island, unencumbered with debt, and looking to his estate as a permanent provision for his family, is one thing;—that of the absentee proprietor, who wishes to lay the foundation of a fortune elsewhere—that of the embarrassed proprietor, who wishes to discharge his encumbrances—and that of the overseer, anxious to realize a sum of money to purchase an estate, are interests of a very different kind indeed from that steady and permanent interest, which, contenting itself with moderate returns, would ensure mild and considerate treatment to the labourers, whose work was to produce them. All these might require increased labour and rapid produce: all these might, in the nature of things, be less solicitous about the eventual exhaustion of the soil, or of the workers of the soil, than about the extent of present profit. And when the proportion of these classes to that of the resident and unembarrassed proprietors was considered, what became of the general statement that the interest of the owner must, in all cases, secure the good treatment of the slaves? He hoped the slaves were well treated, but that they must be so from any necessitating and unalterable cause he could not agree*.”

Again, on the 19th June, 1816, Mr. CANNING observed, that “it was far from him to doubt the omnipotence of Parliament; but he thought that the question should not be stirred unless interference became absolutely necessary. *When that necessity arose, his voice should be fearlessly raised in its favour.*” “He had known, in some cases, instances of obstinacy in the Colonial Assemblies, which left that House no choice but of direct interference. Such conduct might now call for such an exertion on the part of Parliament; but all he pleaded for was, that *time should be granted.* The

* Hansard's Parl. Hist. vol. xxxiv. p. 538—550.

address (Mr. Palmer's) could not be misunderstood. *It said to the assemblies, You are safe for the present from the interference of Parliament, on the belief that you will do yourselves what is required of you. The Assemblies might be left to infer the consequences of refusal, and PARLIAMENT MIGHT REST SATISFIED WITH THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT THEY HELD IN THEIR HANDS THE MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING THAT WHICH THEY HAD PROPOSED*.*"

Enough has probably been said on this subject. Let us now advert to another. It is alleged, that the Abolitionists have acted in bad faith towards the Colonists; that throughout the Slave-Trade controversy, they professed to have no view to any object but that of the abolition of the *Trade*, and disclaimed any ulterior design of aiming at the EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES; but that now, the emancipation of the Slaves was their declared and settled purpose.

To judge correctly of the fairness of this imputation, it will be necessary to take a review of what was all along avowed upon the point in question by those who took a prominent part in advocating the cause of abolition.

The language both of Mr. PITT and Mr. FOX was very unequivocal. In April 1791, we find the latter laying down the following general principle on the subject, from which he never deviated.

“ Personal freedom must be the first object of every human being; and it was a RIGHT of which he who deprives a fellow-creature is absolutely criminal in so depriving him, and which he who withholds when it is in his power to restore, is no less criminal in withholding †.”

No less decisive was the language of Mr. PITT, in

* Hansard's Debates, vol. xxxiv. p. 1220.

† Hansard's Parliamentary History, vol. xxix. p. 334.

April 1792, "It is within the power of the Colonies," he remarked, "and is it not their indispensable duty, to apply themselves to the correction of the various abuses by which population is restrained. The most important consequences may be expected to attend Colonial regulations for this purpose. With the improvement of internal population, the condition of every Negro will improve also: his LIBERTY *will advance, or at least he will be approaching to a state of liberty.* NOR CAN YOU INCREASE THE HAPPINESS OR EXTEND THE FREEDOM OF THE NEGRO, WITHOUT ADDING IN AN EQUAL DEGREE TO THE SAFETY OF THE ISLANDS AND OF ALL THEIR INHABITANTS. *Thus, Sir, in the place of slaves, who naturally have an interest directly opposite to that of their master, and are therefore viewed by them with an eye of constant suspicion, you will create a body of valuable citizens and subjects forming a part of the same community, having a common interest with their superiors in the security and prosperity of the whole. Gentlemen, talk of the diminution of labour. But if you restore to this degraded race the true feelings of men; if you take them out from among the order of brutes, and place them on a level with the rest of the human species, they will then work with that energy which is natural to men, and their labour will be productive in a thousand ways above what it has yet been, as the labour of a man must be more productive than that of a brute*.*"

Mr. Pitt then proceeded to illustrate his argument by referring to the answers which had been given by the Grenada Assembly to certain queries put to them by the Privy Council; and in which it was affirmed, that the Negroes did twice as much work when employed

* Hansard's Parliamentary History, vol. xxix. p. 1138.

for their own benefit, as they did when labouring for their masters. The whole of the passage, indeed the whole of that splendid speech, is most highly deserving of attention.

Again, in 1804, Mr. Pitt affirmed, that "*it was for the interest of the planters, and for the benefit of all the islands, (and those who look at the subject with reference to the principles of general philosophy would admit, that the system of restraint was as unprofitable as it was odious); that the labour of a man who was conscious of freedom, was of much more value than of him who felt that he was a slave* *."

Lord GRENVILLE'S views were perfectly coincident with those of Mr. PITT and Mr. FOX. "*Personal freedom,*" observed his Lordship, in 1806, "*was a blessing granted by God, and could not with justice be violated.*" "*In the course of Mr. Pitt's discussions of the subject, his calculations on the comparative value of the labour of freemen and slaves, were luminous and convincing. One of the incontrovertible results was, that the labour of slaves was not so profitable by much as that of freemen* †."

Again: "*It is of great consequence that we should look attentively to that period, when the disgrace of slavery, in any form, shall no longer be suffered within the territories of this free country. While we are advocates for the liberties of Europe, while we raise the standard of freedom against the common enemy of order, virtue, and humanity, it behoves us peculiarly to preserve that freedom unpolluted within the pale of the British empire. I recommend this measure as the most safe and effectual means of the ultimate emancipa-*

* Hansard's Debates, vol. ii. p. 550.

† Hansard's Debates, vol. vii. pp. 803, 804.

tion of the Slaves in the West Indies. By this expedient you will abundantly ameliorate their condition, so that they may be fitted for the enjoyment of that liberty which in every region of the earth IS THE COMMON RIGHT OF HUMAN NATURE*.”

Nor was Earl GREY less decisive on this point. In 1807, he thus expressed himself:

“We have been told, that if this be considered as a measure of justice, we do not follow up our own principles; for if slavery be in itself unjust, we ought to abolish it altogether. I think it sufficient to say that *the result of this measure will, I trust, lead to the abolition of slavery,* ENCOURAGED AND ASSISTED BY SUCH REGULATIONS AS THE WISDOM OF PARLIAMENT MAY AFTERWARDS THINK FIT TO ADOPT. I trust, that by this measure, slavery will gradually wear out without the immediate intervention of any positive law; in like manner as took place in the states of Greece and Rome, and some parts of modern Europe, *where slaves have been permitted to work out and purchase their own freedom, and that such regulations may be adopted as have been adopted in some of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. In some of the states of America, measures of gradual emancipation have been adopted; and I would ask whether any instance can be pointed out, of insurrections and revolutions in consequence of such measures, or whether they have not, in such states been peaceable and orderly*?”*

It seems wholly unnecessary to quote the frequent declarations of Mr. WILBERFORCE to the same effect. He often declared his strong desire “to convert the Slaves into a free and happy peasantry, capable of de-

* Debates on Slave Trade, for 1807, pp. 27, 28.

† Hansard's Debates, vol. viii. pp. 954, 955.

fending the islands which they inhabited, instead of endangering them by their presence*." It may be of still more weight in the argument, to refer to the memorable declaration of Mr. WARD, now Lord DUDLEY and WARD, himself a large proprietor of slaves, whose numbers have continued regularly and rapidly to increase under his benign and paternal management. "It was a fact," he observed, "which needed no evidence to support it, *that the human race was prevented by nothing but ILL TREATMENT, from multiplying as fast in the West Indies as in every other country where the bounty of nature was not cramped by mischievous institutions.*" "The reasons which applied to the termination of the Slave Trade," he was of opinion, "applied as well TO THE TOTAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY" as to that of the Slave Trade; "*and if I did not believe,*" added he, "*that this measure would ultimately tend to the emancipation of the Negroes, I should be inclined to oppose it as an improper compromise between the British Parliament and the West-India planters †.*"

But even if the Abolitionists had heretofore been silent on this subject, the principles on which the abolition of slavery is now called for would not have been affected by such a circumstance. For it cannot be denied, that the very same principles which led to the condemnation of the Slave Trade by the British Legislature, as immoral, inhuman, and unjust, must lead to the very same sentence on the Slavery which has been produced by it, whenever that system comes under the serious review of Parliament. Nor is this any new opinion. It is an opinion which was clearly and une-

* See Hansard's Debates, vol. xxxv. p. 775.

† Debates on the Slave Trade for 1807, p. 167.

quivocally expressed in 1807, by two of his Majesty's present Cabinet Ministers, who were then hostile to the measure of abolition.

The Earl of WESTMORELAND observed, that "*if the Slave Trade was contrary to justice and humanity, it was also contrary to justice and humanity to keep the Negroes who had been procured by means of the trade in a state of perpetual slavery* *."

And it was the Earl of LIVERPOOL's opinion, that "*The same principle on which the noble Lord condemned the Slave Trade applied with equal force to the state of slavery itself* †."

The language of Mr. WINDHAM, in 1806, was still more full and decisive. "That the Slave Trade," he said, "is contrary to justice, humanity, and sound policy, nobody can doubt; and I would add, slavery too; for that is the first character of slavery. Slavery is that which every one must wish to see abolished. *And certainly I had rather see it abolished by law, than wait for the process of civilization. What gentlemen say of the Slave Trade, I say of slavery, that it is a great evil; they are each malum in se.* Although slavery has so long subsisted, I have no hesitation in saying, it is a state not fit to subsist, because it gives to one human being a greater power over another than it is fit for any human being to possess. Man is not fit to have so much power over his fellow-creatures ‡."

It is not, of course, the intention of this pamphlet to enter into the general question of Negro Slavery. On that subject I must refer to the various publications

* Hansard's Debates, vol. viii. p. 702.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 805.

‡ Debates on the Slave Trade, for 1806, pp. 70, 71.

which have recently appeared*, and which prove that the state of *slavery* existing in the British Colonies, no less than the Slave Trade from which it sprung, is *contrary to justice, humanity, and sound policy; inconsistent with the principles of the British Constitution; and repugnant to the spirit of the Christian religion; and that it ought to be abolished at the earliest period, which is compatible with a due attention to the various interests involved in the measure.*

If the reader concurs in this proposition, he will probably find in the preceding pages enough to satisfy him, that the British Parliament alone is competent to carry that proposition into effect, and that it may do so without any apprehension of those dangers which, it has been so confidently affirmed, must follow from parliamentary interference.

* See particularly Mr. Wilberforce's "Appeal," and a pamphlet entitled "Negro Slavery."

FINIS.

LONDON: